**Great sand eel**

*Hyperoplus lanceolatus*

Order: *Perciformes*

Family: *Ammodytidae*

External appearance

A small coastal fish; larger individuals can reach 40 cm in length. Similar in appearance to the lesser sand eel. Often greenish-blue in colour, but can also be yellowish-brown.

Distribution

The great sand eel is found in the eastern North Atlantic and adjacent seas. It inhabits almost the entire Baltic Sea, except for the distant ends of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia.

Diet

Small great sand eels feed on zooplankton; adults also eat round gobies and the juveniles and larvae of smelt and herring. Great sand eels inhabit the sandy bottoms of shallow coastal waters, where they compete with small flounder for food.

Development

Spawns from May to August. The eggs are deposited in small clumps on the sand.

Fishing

Great sand eels are caught in small quantities in Latvia, mainly as herring by-catch. Anglers tend to use great sand eels as bait. It is, however, an important fish in the North Sea fishing industry.

Interesting facts

Great sand eels spend most of their lives burrowed in the sand, where they hide from predators such as water birds, seals, perch, turbot and cod, who like to eat them.